Slovenia – Alpine Flowers of the Julian Alps

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Ljubljana and transfer to Ribčev Laz on Lake Bohinj
Day 2/7	Daily botanical excursions from Bohinj
Day 8	Transfer to Ljubljana and fly London

Departs

June

Focus

Alpine flora… though butterflies and other natural history will also be enjoyed.

Grading

Grade A/B. Easy to moderate day walks only, between 915 and 2,280 metres

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code SVN01) or our latest brochure.

Highlights:

- Look for butterflies such as Scarce Copper, Lesser Marbled Fritillary, Woodland Brown & Spotted Fritillary.
- Stay in Ribcev Laz on the shores of Lake Bohinj.
- Look for Camiolan Masterwort & Dwarf Alpenrose.
- Orchids including Burnt tip, Common Spotted, Fragrant, Lesser Butterfly and Small White Orchids.
- Chamois & Alpine Marmot live in the Mountains.
- Camic Lily, Sweet William, Alpine Butterwort, Alpine Catchfly & Adenostyles among wayside flora.







Mountain Avens, Carnic Lily, Zois' Bellflower (Domen Stanic)

Naturetrek

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Introduction

Slovenia is a small, unspoilt country located in the heart of Europe, between Austria, Hungary and Italy. It is a wild and beautiful land where the tall jagged mountains of the Julian Alps overlook tranquil lakes and spectacular waterfalls. Forest, some of it virgin, covers more than half the country which is predominantly mountainous.


Meadows above Mostinca Gorge (Kerrie Porteous)

Slovenia is home to 2,900 species of plant, 70% of which are unique to the south-eastern Alps, and Bohinj itself is the home of an annual International Wildflower Festival, held in May each year. We will explore the diverse habitats of the Triglav National Park, including rich river valleys and wetlands, flower-filled Alpine meadows, forest tracksides and pathways and mountain pastures and screes, seeking out the flower species synonymous with this beautiful area. We will also enjoy the birds, mammals and butterflies that this beautiful country has to offer. Wallcreepers live in the mountains on the steep bare cliffs and amongst other birds we will hope to see are Alpine Swift, Alpine Chough, and Black Woodpecker (which is quite common in the forests). The Three-toed Woodpecker is also a possibility, although rare. Butterflies that we will look out for include Scarce and Purple-edged Copper, Woodland Brown, False Heath & Spotted Fritillary. Red and Roe Deer, Wild Boar and Chamois inhabit the forests in good numbers, although Brown Bear,and Wolf are rare and are only seen by the very lucky few! In the National Park, meanwhile, there are also Alpine Ibex, Marmots and Golden Eagles to be found. Farming is traditional, with sheep (kept mainly for cheese making) grazing in high altitude meadows while many of the meadows lower down have strange-looking racks, called kozolec, to dry the hay, unique to parts of Slovenia. The people are most friendly and helpful and many, especially the young, speak very good English.

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1 Fly Ljubljana

We begin our holiday with a flight from London to Ljubljana. On arrival, we transfer by minibus to the Hotel Jezero in Ribčev Laz, our base for the week on the banks of Lake Bohinj. The journey takes

us roughly an hour, and so we expect to arrive by early evening, giving ourselves plenty of time to get unpacked, settle into the hotel, and enjoy our first evening meal together.

Day 2 Lake Bohinj


Lake Bohinj (Kerrie Porteous)

Today we explore our surroundings by walking from our hotel and making our way right around the beautiful Lake Bohinj. Here we will explore the meadows and woodland fringing the lake, and begin to get to know the beautiful Alpine plants the area has to offer. Meadow Clary *(Salvia pratensis)*, Erect Clematis *(Clematis recta)*, Clustered Bellflower *(Campanula glomerata)* and Twayblade *(Neottia ovata)* can all be found, and as we progress around the north coast of the lake, we may add four Helleborines, *Cephalanthera damasonium* (White Helleborine), *C. rubra* (Red Helleborine), *C. longifolia* (Sword-leaved Helleborine) and *Epipactis atrorubens* (Dark Red Helleborine) together with *Frangula alnus* (Alder Buckthorn), *Rhamnus saxatilis* (Rock Buckthorn), *Petrorhagia saxifraga* (Tunic Flower) and *Hacquetia epipactis* (Hacquetia). *Three-leaved Anemone (Anemone trifolia)*, *Hepatica nobilis* and *Lily of the Valley (Convallaria majalis)* are also possible, and as we progress to the far side of the lake, Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia).* We'll carry our picnic lunch with us and stop to enjoy it along the way, making time for a refreshing dip in the lake for anyone that so wishes!

We will no doubt smell the Fringed Pink *Dianthus sternbergii* before we see it, as we get closer to the village of Ukanc. As we cross the meadows to the little jetty, we can look for *Dianthus sanguineous* and Perennial Honesty *(Lunaria redivida)*, and arriving at the jetty, we catch the tourist boat all the way back to our hotel.

Day 3 Mostnica Gorge

This morning we will use our vehicles to give us a head start, travelling to the next village of Stara Fuzina and the start of today's walk. From here we cross the Devil's Bridge over the 20m deep gorge, and turn right towards the Mostnica gorge.

We pass through forest, wet rocks and open areas of scrub and grassy banks. Alpine Butterwort (*Pinguicula alpina*), Southern Greenweed *(Genista radiate)*, Heath Speedwell *(Veronica officinalis)*, and *Homogyne saxatilis* (a Purple Coltsfoot) can all be found during the walk along the river. Bird's-nest Orchids (*Neottia nidus-avis),* maybe slightly past their best at this time of year, can be seen, and we hope to be entertained by White-throated Dippers dashing up and down the river. The warm and sunny initial stretch of the path is good for butterflies including White Admiral and Heath Fritillary.


Sweet William (Domen Stanic)

We emerge from the gorge at Koča na Vojah (kočas are mountain cafes, and fortunately never far away during our time in Slovenia!) where we will have a picnic and a cup of coffee, beer or tea which are available at the refuge. From here we gently ascend along a path, through open hay meadows, filled with the beautiful Carnic Lily (*Lilium carniolicum)*, Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus)*, Dark Rampion (*Phyteuma ovatum),* Wolf's-bane *(Aconitum lycoctonum subsp. vulparia)*, Dusky Crane's-bill *(Geranium phaeum)* and Great Masterwort *(Astrantia major)*, the latter often adorned with Scarce Copper butterflies. Soon enough we re-enter the woodland and follow the path up to the Slap Mostnice (Mostnice Waterfall). From here, we descend back to our vehicles and return to the hotel in time for dinner.

Day 4 Vrata Valley

Today we will visit the Vrata Valley to admire the spectacular Slap Pericnik waterfall and enjoy a wooded walk beyond, searching for more plants such as Orange Lily *(Lilium bulbiferum)* Flax-flowered Bellflower *(Campanula carnica),* Einsel's Columbine *(Aquilegia einseleana)*, Tolpis *(Tolpis staticifolia)*, Crimped Bellflower *(Favratia zoysi)*, and *(Leucanthemum ircutianum)*, Blue Saxifrage *(Saxifraga caesiaI* and more.
We will be looking for butterflies; Black-veined White, Wood White, Brimstone, Common Blue, Comma, Silver-washed Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and, hopefully, Checkered Skipper.

Then we will drive to a peatbog where the acidic habitat supports a further range of acid-loving plants that includes Arnica *Arnica montana*, Whorled Soloman's Seal *Polygonatum verticillatum* and different wintergreen species. More familiar species such as Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* grow in the Sphagnum Moss with Hair's-tail Cottongrass *(Eriophorum vaginatum)* Fox and Cubs *(Pilosella aurantiaca),* Ragged Robin *(Silene flos-cuculi)* and Marsh Marigold *(Calthra palustris)* White Buttercup *(Ranunculus platanifolius)* would be a good find.

During the day we should see many common birds; Common Cuckoo, Common Buzzard, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Tits, Common Firecrest and Goldcrest, Common Kestrel, Common Chiffchaff and more.

Day 5 Mangart Saddle

An early start this morning takes us west of our base to the Triglav National Park and another botanical highlight. Our destination is part of the vast Mangart Saddle (2,678 metres) which has a rich and unique flora unrivalled in the Julian Alps. Walking down through alpine meadows from the limestone ridge below the Mangart Saddle, we will be on the lookout for Long-flowered Primrose (*Primula halleri),* Dwarf Snowbell *(Soldanella pusilla*), a white-flowered buttercup, *Ranunculus seguieri*, and the wonderful Globe Flower *(Troillius europaeus)*.

In the short turf grow an interesting selection of louseworts, plus Trumpet Gentian *(Gentiana clusii*) and patches of Eidelweiss *(Leontopodium nivale)*. In rocky scree lurk *Silene acaulis* and a variety of saxifrages together with Dwarf Alpenrose (*Rhodothamnus chamaecistus*) and the beautiful Triglav Rose, a pink cinquefoil *Potentilla nitida*. Crevice plants include Rock Sandwort *(Minuarta rupestris)* and Austrian Whitlow Grass *(Draba dubia)*. These are just a few of the spectacular plants awaiting us!


Edelweiss and *Pedicularis rostratocapitata* (Domen Stanic)

It is often rather cool for butterflies at this time of the year but Dewy Ringlets are abundant during their brief emergence. Birds are easier to see and hear in the open Alpine grasslands and Mangart supports Alpine Chough, Alpine Accentor, Water Pipit, Northern Wheatear, Black Redstart and Ptarmigan, a species threatened by climate change in the Alps.

Day 6 Visic Pass

Today we head east via the small and picturesque town of Bled to the motorway that takes us to Krasna Gora, then up the winding road at the north side of Triglav Massif to Visic Pass. We can enjoy wonderful panoramic views, as well as admiring the many cyclists, as we take coffee. We will then enjoy the grassland, tracks and scree for alpine plants and more. Bladder Gentian (*Gentiana utriculosa*), Mountain Valerian (*Valeriana montana*), Athamanta (*Athamanta cretensis*) and other interesting species grow here. Ring Ouzel may be found here and Adder is also possible.

We will head back down to a nearby carpark that is a great spot for our picnic lunch and to explore more grassland and woodland trail for plants that include Serrated Wintergreen (*Orthilia secunda*), Dark Columbine (*Aquilegia atrada*) and Birds'-foot Primrose (*Primula farinosa*). A small meadow further along should be very busy with butterflies such as Clouded Apollo, Mazarine Blue, Duke of Burgundy Fritillary and Chequered Skipper as we search for more fascinating plants.

Day 7 Vogel Ski Centre

A short drive along the southern shore of Lake Bohinji towards Ukanc takes us to the cable car station for Vogel Ski Centre. Within minutes a gondola glides up to the top station at c1500m. A ski lift then adds 160m more height and we have a day to enjoy seeing what emerges when the skiing is over. Which is often lots!

At the first level we will look for Bavarian Masterwort (*Astrantia bavarica*), Hybrid Buttercup (*Ranunculus hybrida*), Shaggy Hawkweed (*Hieracium villosum*), louseworts and others. With luck any frost pockets may have delayed development so flowering Alpine Butterwort (*Pinguicula alpina*), Dwarf Alpenrose (*Rhodothamnus chamaecistus*) and more should be seen. Of course we

will have to scan closely for the very pretty Edelweiss (*Leontopodium nivale*) and other alpine favourites.
The views are stunning and hopefully it will be warm enough to enjoy them. And also for some butterflies and moths to be on the wing, with birds such as Alpine Accentor, Black Redstart, Crossbill, Raven, and Golden Eagle.

Day 8 Vogar, transfer Ljubljana; fly London

This morning we make the journey up to the mountain meadows at Vogar (1054m), high above the north coast of Bohinj. From the rough car park in the forest, we can explore the woodland where Horned Rampion (*Phyteuma scheuchzeri)*, Alpine Laburnum (*Laburnum alpinum)* and Sword-leaved Helleborine *(Cephalanthera longifolia)* all grow. From here we will walk through the alpine meadows, looking for Fragrant Orchids, (*Gymnadenia conopsea subsp. conopsea)*, Slender Cotton-grass (*Eriophorum gracile)* and Common Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia)*, and if the sun is shining, numerous butterflies including perhaps Scotch Argus, Grizzled Skipper, Woodland Brown and Woodland Ringlet, Purple-shot Copper and Clouded Apollo.


Carnic Bellflower (Domen Stanic)

As we pass the local koča the meadows become filled with the incredible orange colour of the Carnic Lily (*Lilium carnicolicum)* and we find further orchids including Burnt Orchid (*Neottia ustulata)* and Small White Orchid (*Gymnadenia albida).* Finally, we make our way through more forest to the spectacular view point over Lake Bohinj, enjoying Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia)*, Wolf's Bane (*Aconitum lycoctonum subsp. vulparia)*, Common Lungwort (*Pulmonaria officinalis)* and Wood vetch (*Vicia sylvatica)* on the way. Our final meadow, overlooking the lake with views all the way back to our hotel, might just yield Round-headed Orchid (*Traunsteinera globosa)* or perhaps Sticky Flax (*Linum viscosum).* After a full morning we return to the hotel for a final picnic lunch and our time in the Julian Alps draws to a close. We must return to Ljubljana Airport for our mid-afternoon flight home.

Tour grading

Grade A/B – Easy to moderate day walks. We will be on foot, on mountain trails, for the best part of each day. We tend to cover between 3 and 8km on a typical day, and you should note that some of the trails are narrow, steep and rocky in places. Enjoyment of this tour, therefore, demands a reasonable level of fitness and a love of walking in the hills. All walks will be taken at a leisurely 'botanical' pace, and a built-in flexibility will take account of the overall abilities of the group.

The highest altitude we will reach is 1922m, at the top of Mt Vogel. You will have a ski lift journey, and then a steady walk. The longest walk is around 6km route along the Mostnica Gorge. Going up is a slow and steady climb up a gorge path. There is a Café and toilets, with a picnic spot at the top. If required, we can arrange for a partial lift up the route.

Focus

The holiday will focus on the outstanding flora and fantastic scenery of the area, but we will also enjoy the rich diversity of butterflies, along with mammals and birds.

Our daily schedule


The meadows above Lake Bohinj

We usually rise for breakfast around 8 am and aim to leave our hotel no later than 9 am for a full day in the field. We break the day to relax and enjoy a picnic lunch, which we will normally make ourselves at breakfast from a selection of delicious local produce. We will aim to return to our hotel between 5 and 6 p.m., depending on the weather and our success in the field. This should allow a little time at the end of each day to relax, shower, and enjoy a drink before dinner. After dinner, for those with energy remaining, your leader will be keen to run through the plants and animals seen during the day, and discuss findings with you before retiring to bed. Please note that we may well choose to vary our day to day schedule depending on the weather forecast, to ensure we save the sunniest days for when we venture to higher ground!

Weather

At this time of year, the weather should be sunny and warm with daytime temperatures typically ranging from 15 to 25ºC. However mountain weather is always variable, with cloud and rain always a possibility, especially in the afternoons. At higher altitudes, overcast conditions can rapidly reduce temperatures, and here waterproofs and a warm jacket should be carried at all times

Food & accommodation

This is a one-centre holiday and we stay in the Hotel Jezero on the banks of Lake Bohinj, a beautiful glacial lake 4.5 km long. All rooms are en-suite and have hairdryers and Wi-Fi. Tea and coffee making facilities are not provided in hotel rooms, but an excellent selection of different teas are available from the bar downstairs! The hotel also has a swimming pool, fitness room and sauna. Please note the sauna and any massages are at additional cost. Use of the pool and fitness room carries no additional charge.

Breakfast and dinner are buffet style at the restaurant in the hotel, with the following drinks included with dinner draft wine, beer, soft drinks, water.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to Slovenia. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice prior to travel.


Hotel Jezero & Lake Bohinj

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website.

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